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On Books

Friends? Allies? A Review of Newman's *The Reluctant Alliance: Behaviorism and Humanism*

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Behavior analysis needs all the friends it can get. Behavior analysis has had relatively little impact on our society (Lamal, 1989). Can behavior analysis win friends and influence society? If you share my view that these are important matters, you will find Newman's *The Reluctant Alliance: Behaviorism and Humanism* interesting reading. *The Reluctant Alliance* consists of a preface, five chapters, and a brief epilogue. (There is no index.) The first chapter provides us with a brief history of humanism and a definition of contemporary humanism. Also included are a brief history of applied behavior analysis and a very brief consideration of the contemporary field. Also in the first chapter, Newman argues that behavior analysis and humanism are compatible. In the second chapter, Newman is concerned with psychotherapy. Here, he considers the legal status of psychotherapy, the humanistic view of psychotherapy, research on the effectiveness of psychotherapy, and the applied behavior analysis view of psychotherapy. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the goals and standards for psychotherapy. Chapter 3 is devoted to morality. Morality is discussed from humanistic and behavior-analytic perspectives, and examples of prototypical work by behavior analysts in the area of morality are presented. The examples concern racial integration, the return of lost items, self-help behaviors of those on public assistance, and criminal behavior. A discussion about the morality of behavior analysis concludes the chapter. Education for humanist goals is the subject of Chapter 4. Included are a discussion of Project Follow-Through and why it failed to be adopted. Contributions of behavior analysis to the teaching of creativity and self-management are described, and consideration is given to problems in implementing humanist education. The last chapter is titled "The ABA, Humanism, and Public Policy." A consideration of the work of Auguste Comte is followed by a discussion of community-based behavior analysis. Newman's behavior-analytic view of the following topics is also provided: political ideology, environmental problems, overpopulation, industry, welfare, and the drug crisis. A large part of the chapter is devoted to the drug crisis. Newman describes contingencies for the drug user, the drug dealer, and policy makers. He concludes that the federal government's approach to illicit drug use has failed and argues for legalization. The chapter ends with a consideration of whether social planning is dehumanizing.

Newman's thesis is that, contrary to conventional wisdom, humanism (of the naturalistic variety) and radical behaviorism "are complementary systems of thought" (Newman, 1992, p. 9). A subthesis is that humanism can provide the ethical framework that behavior analysis currently lacks. (If you have noticed that I referred to radical behaviorism in one sentence and then to behavior analysis in the next, hold on, I will address this below.)

Newman maintains that humanism

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and radical behaviorism are two of today's most anxiety-provoking systems of thought. He fails to persuade me that this characterization of humanism in general is true. It is true that secular humanism is frequently attacked by some in our society, but the extent of this reaction is not at all clear. Shrillness of reaction should not be confused with extent of reaction. At least relative to radical behaviorism, it seems plausible that some form of humanism is widely accepted in, say, the academy. Humanisms of one kind or another have been around for a long time, as Newman acknowledges.

I would like to have seen greater consideration of dualism in the very brief history of humanism we are given. At least since Plato, dualism has been one of the major ontological themes of Western worldviews. Dualism was given renewed impetus by Descartes; his view has had a tremendous influence that continues to this day. Dualism is a form of mentalism (or vice versa), and mentalism distracts us, as B. F. Skinner pointed out so frequently, from searching for the manipulable causes of behavior.

It would be interesting to know the extent to which humanists of various persuasions subscribe to some form of dualism. It would be even more interesting to know the extent to which behavior analysts do. Newman says that from Cartesian dualism, "it was but a small step to reject the special status given to mental activity and to assert that both mind and body are subject to environmental determinism" (Newman, 1992, p. 21). This view may be characteristic of naturalistic humanists, but is clearly is not true of others. The libertarians, for example, in the ongoing debate concerning free will versus determinism, vehemently reject the notion of determinism. I nevertheless strongly suspect that these libertarians would describe themselves as humanists of some sort. One begins to wonder how many naturalistic humanists there are. Just how many potential allies are there out there?

Again, consider the issue of free will. In arguing that humanism and behavior analysis are compatible, Newman lists 14 propositions from the humanist credo according to Corliss Lamont, and matches each with a relevant statement from B. F. Skinner. One of Lamont's propositions is that "Humanism . . . believes that human beings, while conditioned by the past, *possess genuine freedom of creative choice and action*" (Lamont, 1965, p. 13, italics added). This is matched with a statement from Skinner (1974)[1] that "In the behavioristic view, man [sic] can now control his own destiny because he knows what must be done and how to do it" (p. 277). On my reading, the first quotation states a free will position and the second does not, especially when taken in the context of Skinner's views about free will. Indeed, Newman is clearly aware that Lamont holds a free will position. I use the phrase "*a* free will position" because there are various free will positions that have been, and are, held. Anything approaching a complete treatment of the complexities of the free will–determinism issue is beyond the scope of this review. Suffice it to say that many who hold free will positions would not agree with Newman's assertion that "If free will does indeed exist, then destructive interventions attempted by behaviorists will be ineffective" (1992, p. 33). One can subscribe to a free will view and yet agree that free will can be constrained or impeded. A basic criterion of most, if not all, free will positions is that the person must have been able to do other than what he or she did in a given set of circumstances. If, as many humanists fear, behavior analysis involves coercing persons, it means only that behavior analysis results in free will being repressed or taken away in just those circumstances arranged by behavior analysts. Many humanists and others have focused on the potential of aversive control for constraining free will, but others have also

[1] Newman (1992, p. 31) cites Skinner's *About Behaviorism* (p. 277) for this quote, but the text of that book, at least in the paperback edition, ends with page 251. I believe that the quotation does indeed come from Skinner, but I did not find it in scanning relevant sections of *About Behaviorism* and two other books of his in which it would be likely to appear.

been aware of the often more subtle, and therefore to them more pernicious, potential for positive reinforcement to eliminate free will. Obviously, from the behavior-analytic point of view, what is not possible (free will) cannot be constrained or eliminated. So there is a fundamental disagreement between naturalistic humanists (and, a fortiori, other kinds of humanists) and behavior analysts.

Thus, Newman is doubtless correct when he says that believers in free will do not dispute the effectiveness of behavioral interventions. It does not follow, however, as Newman says it does, that free will advocates can certainly accept that such interventions work "because the individual freely decides to behave in a particular fashion" (1992, p. 33). This perspective begs the question of whether the individual did, in fact, freely choose, or whether he or she was the victim of overt or covert control, aversive or not, exercised by others. Indeed, Newman describes a humanist leadership seminar in which he was confronted by participants' fears of such control. Thus, there is an important difference between radical behaviorists and humanists that cannot be papered over or talked away. At the same time, however, this disagreement is embedded in a set of important points of agreement between naturalistic humanists and radical behaviorists.

In my second paragraph I mentioned what I called Newman's subthesis that behavior analysis requires a framework outside of itself for decisions about which behaviors should be promoted. That is, behavior analysis does not include an ethical system, and humanism can provide one. I do not find this argument persuasive. Part of the problem may stem from a failure to distinguish clearly between radical behaviorism, a philosophical program, and behavior analysis, a system of principles, methods, and techniques. Writing as a radical behaviorist, Skinner (1953, 1971, 1974) clearly did not agree with this view, nor do other radical behaviorists who incorporate a naturalistic ethic into their worldview. This naturalistic ethic may be compatible with a humanist ethic, but it is not derived from it.

I agree with Newman that the goals of humanism are, perhaps without exception, worthy goals. As he points out, however, they lack an effective means of implementation. Behavior analysis, I also agree, may provide an effective method for achieving those goals. Consider education. Newman correctly, I believe, maintains that it is possible to have students who both feel good about themselves and can master academic skills and materials. He points out that humanistic educators and psychotherapists are enamored of process and believe that results-oriented approaches are misguided. Thus, we have seen in education at all levels a great concern with what the teacher is to do but usually little attention paid to what the results of this process should be. Although this focus on process at the expense of concern with results is now shifting in at least some school districts, it clearly continues to be a dominant feature of higher education. The evaluation of postsecondary instructors continues to focus on supposed traits of instructors and how well they carry out traditional activities such as lecturing, while at the same time studiously avoiding the question of the extent to which students have learned. In principle, behavior analysis could help; in practice, it has been unable to. Among other goals presumably shared by humanists and behavior analysts are the enhancement of creativity and self-management; Newman provides examples of how behavior analysis can assist in achieving these goals.

Rather than being a grand design for any society, Newman (as do some other behaviorists) views behavior analysis as "a situation-analysis approach" (1992, p. 90). In practice it may, indeed, be impossible for behavior analysts to effect more than first-order, situation-specific change. But why this lower level change should, in principle, be considered preferable to helping effectuate society-wide change is not made clear. Indeed, Newman discusses a number of global prob-

lems (e.g., deteriorating environment, overpopulation, drug use), with the explicit assumption that behavior analysis probably has much to offer in the way of solutions. Interestingly, no appeals to humanism as the source of one's ethical stance toward these problems are made.

There is much with which to agree in this book. I am sure that all behavior analysts, for example, would agree that psychotherapy should be conducted as a science, during the course of which progress (or its absence) is continually measured. Also, therapists reinforce clients' behavior that coincides with the therapists' theoretical orientations, resulting in clients becoming converts. (But why would we expect otherwise, or want it to be otherwise, if the therapists are behavior analysts?)

A problem throughout this book is that the terms *radical behaviorism, behavior analysis,* and *applied behavior analysis* are used in a confusing manner. Radical behaviorism, for example, is defined as the philosophical framework of applied behavior analysis (p. 13). What about the experimental analysis of behavior? Also, Newman says that he is concerned with humanism and applied behavior analysis (p. 14), and sometimes he is. But at other times, he is actually concerned with humanism and radical behaviorism. The waters do get muddied.

As I write this, parents in a nearby school district are strongly protesting a proposed change in the district's curriculum because they say it will teach humanism. I am fully persuaded that these parents would also reject radical behaviorism. If humanists and radical behaviorists share a set of adversaries, does that make them friends? Allies?

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